

## WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

- 1                   1.       An electronic lock and money control system comprising:  
2                   at least one safe comprising:  
3                   a housing having an interior compartment for securing money, and  
4                   an outer door having an electronic lock mechanism to control access to the interior  
5                   compartment;  
6                   a data input device;  
7                   an electronic display;  
8                   a connector interface mounted to the housing; and  
9                   a control system arranged to communicate with the data input device,  
10                  electronic display, connector interface and electronic lock mechanism, wherein the  
11                  control system includes a processor programmed to control operation of the  
12                  electronic lock, as well as operate as a central system controller when connected  
13                  to at least one other remote safe via the connector interface to monitor and  
14                  accumulate financial and operational information for each remote unit.
- 1                   2.       The system of claim 1 wherein the at least one safe further  
2                   comprises a bill validator apparatus mounted to the housing for receiving and  
3                   validating bills of various denominations, and a storage device located within the  
4                   safe for storing all validated bills, wherein the processor is programmed to maintain  
5                   a record of all received and validated bills.
- 1                   3.       The system of claim 1 further comprising a cash dispensing  
2                   apparatus mounted to the housing, the cash dispensing apparatus including a set of  
3                   openings in the housing arranged to be loaded with containers each containing  
4                   money of a predetermined value, and a separate opening and dispensing tray in the  
5                   housing to dispense money containers for removal from the safe.
- 1                   4.       The system of claim 1 wherein the control system is further  
2                   programmed to accumulate and track deposits and withdrawals of money, recognize  
3                   user identification data, and store transaction data and associated user identity data

4 in a memory; wherein the processor is further arranged to process and sort stored  
5 transaction and operational data to generate an audit report and accounting reports.

1 5. The system of claim 1 wherein a remote safe unit is connected  
2 to the connector interface, the remote safe unit comprising a bill validator apparatus  
3 mounted to a housing thereof for receiving and validating bills of various  
4 denominations, and a storage device located within the remote safe for storing all  
5 validated bills, wherein the processor is programmed to maintain a record of all  
6 bills received and validated in the remote safe.

1 6. The system of claim 1 wherein the connection interface  
2 comprises a communications port to allow communication between the control  
3 system and a remote computer.

1 7. The system of claim 1 wherein a remote safe unit is connected  
2 to the connector interface, the remote safe unit comprising a cash dispensing  
3 apparatus mounted to a housing thereof, the cash dispensing apparatus including a  
4 set of openings in the housing arranged to be loaded with containers each containing  
5 money of a predetermined value, and a separate opening and dispensing tray in the  
6 housing to dispense cash containers for removal from the safe, wherein the  
7 processor is programmed to maintain a record of all money load and dispensed from  
8 the remote safe.

1 8. The system of claim 1 wherein the processor is programmed  
2 to recognize different levels of user system access authority.

1 9. The system of claim 1 wherein one or more remote safe units  
2 are connected to the connector interface, and the processor is further programmed  
3 to accumulate and track deposits and withdrawals of money, recognize user  
4 identification data, and store transaction data and associated user identity data in a  
5 memory for each remote unit, wherein the processor is arranged to process and sort  
6 stored transaction and operational data to generate an individual and totaled audit  
7 and accounting reports.

1           10.    The system of claim 9 wherein the processor is arranged to  
2 selectively generate financial reports including individual user reports, cash showing  
3 actual cash present by location, and end day reports, as well as an audit report  
4 itemizing the occurrence of selected events during a specific time period.

1           11.    A network of interconnected electronic locking and money  
2 control devices comprising:

3                a central processing system integrated with one of the electronic  
4 locking and money control devices and arranged to control operation of the  
5 integrated device, wherein the central processing system is connected to all other  
6 network devices, and further arranged to communicate with all the other network  
7 devices and provide network control of all the other devices.

1           12.    The network of claim 11 wherein the central processing  
2 system is arranged to automatically detect and assign network addresses for devices  
3 added to the network.

1           13.    The network of claim 11 wherein the other network devices  
2 comprise a data entry subsystem arranged to receive and recognize user  
3 identification data, and transmit the data to the central processing system, wherein  
4 the central processing system is arranged to determine whether the user is  
5 authorized to access the system, and controlling operation of the network device  
6 based on the authorization determination.

1           14.    The network of claim 11 wherein the data entry system is  
2 arranged to receive the user identification data in the form of at least a user number,  
3 electronic key, or biometric identification.

1           15.    The network of claim 11 wherein a network device comprises  
2 an electronic lock and control arrangement.

1                   16.     The network of claim 11 wherein a network device is a cash  
2     dispensing apparatus, the cash dispensing apparatus including a set of openings  
3     arranged to be loaded with containers each containing cash of a predetermined  
4     value, and a separate opening and dispenser to dispense cash containers for removal  
5     from the safe, wherein the cash dispensing apparatus is arranged to maintain an  
6     accounting of all containers and provide a report to the central processing system.

1                   17.     The network of claim 11 wherein a network device comprises  
2     a universal interface designed to communicate with a plurality of types of bill  
3     validators arranged to receive and validate bills of various denominations, and a  
4     storage device for storing all validated bills, wherein the universal interface is  
5     programmed to maintain a record of all received and validated bills and provide a  
6     report to the central processing system.

1                   18.     The network of claim 11 wherein the central processing  
2     system is fully programmable via a data entry subsystem arranged to receive and  
3     recognize user identification data, and transmit the data to the central processing  
4     system.

1                   19.     The network of claim 11 wherein the central processing  
2     system is programmed to recognize different levels of user system access authority.

1                   20.     The network of claim 19 wherein the central processing  
2     system is programmed to recognize a level of user system access authority as a  
3     function of time or date.

1                   21.     The network of claim 11 wherein the central processing  
2     system is programmed to assign selected devices to an access group to provide  
3     flexible levels of user access.

1                   22.     The network of claim 11 wherein the central processing  
2     system is programmed to accumulate and track deposits and withdrawals of money  
3     from all devices on the network, recognize user identification data, and store

4 transaction data and associated user identity data in a memory for each device  
5 connected to the network, wherein the central processing system is arranged to  
6 process and sort stored transaction and operational data to generate an individual  
7 and totaled audit and accounting reports.

1 23. The network of claim 11 wherein the central processing  
2 system is programmed to develop entities of money that comprise one or more of  
3 the devices connected to the network and process the developed entities as a single  
4 device for access and accounting purposes, while also being able to track each  
5 device separately.

1 24. The network of claim 23 wherein the central processing  
2 system is programmed such that entities of money may comprise other entities of  
3 money as well as one or more of the devices on the network or remote sub-networks  
4 and treat them as one for access and accounting purposes, without losing the ability  
5 to track each entity of money or device separately if needed.

1 25. The network of claims 11 wherein the central processing  
2 system is arranged to selectively generate financial reports including individual user  
3 reports, a cash report showing actual cash present by location, and end-day reports,  
4 as well as an audit report itemizing the occurrence of selected events during a  
5 specific time period.

1 26 The network of claim 11 wherein each device connected to  
2 the network is arranged to store individual configuration information, monetary  
3 totals and a selected audit information to facilitate replacement of the central  
4 processing system.